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RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GREEK RIOTS: DECEMBER 24 UPDATE

REF: ATHENS 1698 AND PREVIOUS

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SUMMARY  
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1. (SBU) Rioting and violence remain ongoing in Athens in localized areas, although at a lower tempo in advance of the holidays. A bus carrying police officers was fired upon -- purportedly with Kalashnikov rifles -- from the grounds of the satellite campus of the Polytechnic University. Police received permission to enter the campus and have collected evidence, but no perpetrators have been identified. Protestors occupying university buildings have begun to depart for the holidays, but have pledged to return in the new year. Meanwhile, protestors have called for a national day of protest on January 9, 2009.

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Ongoing Localized Violence  
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2. (SBU) Although protests in Greece have been winding down in advance of the holidays, December 23 saw a number of demonstrations, some of which turned violent. Over 3,000 marched in the Exarchia neighborhood with one group purportedly setting fire to a police car and another burning a pig's head wearing a police cap. One last demonstration before Christmas has been scheduled for 16:00 on December 24 in the Monastiraki area - a major tourist area downtown Athens.

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Shots Fired at Police Bus  
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3. (SBU) Early in the morning of December 23, a police bus was fired upon from the grounds of the satellite campus of the Polytechnic University - located in the northeast suburbs of Athens. Two bullets hit the bus, bursting a tire and hitting the engine block. There were no injuries. A prosecutor immediately lifted the "academic asylum" rules restricting police from entering university campuses, and the rector of the Polytechnic University provided his consent for investigating police to enter. Police have recovered seven cartridge cases. Initial ballistic tests indicate that the shots were fired from two separate Kalashnikov rifles. No perpetrators have been identified.

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Home for the Holidays?  
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4. (SBU) Meanwhile, anarchists who have been "occupying"

university buildings are preparing to depart for the holidays. The Greek media have widely reported that following a December 23 "session" at the Polytechnic University, the "occupiers" agreed to depart "with pride," for the holidays but with the promise to return and resume protests in the new year. Meanwhile, those occupying the Economic University campus (just up the road from the Polytechnic) announced that they would proceed with their occupation through New Year's Eve and resume protests immediately after the holidays.

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January 9, 2009 - National Day of Protest  
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15. (SBU) Finally, various protesting groups have announced that January 9, 2009 will be a national day of protest throughout Greece. We understand that a number of labor unions will also likely join protests on that day.  
SPECKHARD